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ABSTRACT

Reflecting Alaska's Reading Performance Standards, this booklet highlights key aspects of what families and teachers can do to teach and support young children as they learn to read using many different strategies. It lists content standards for English/Language Arts and reading performance standards divided into four categories ranging from age 5 to age 18. The booklet describes 5 phases of reading development from preschool to grade 3 considering the role of the child, teacher, and family in each phase. The 5 phases are: (1) awareness and exploration; (2) experimental reading and writing; (3) early reading and writing; (4) transitional reading and writing; and (5) independent and productive reading and writing. It gives 51 research base and summary literature citations for preschool, kindergarten, and grades 1 through 3. (SC)

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ED 434 314

Opening the Door

What Families & Teachers Can Do to Help Every Child Become a Reader

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CS 015 694

Opening the Door

What Families & Teachers Can Do

to Help Every Child Become a Reader

Richard S. Cross
Commissioner of Education

Compiled by the Alaska Department of Education - 1999

A Message from the Commissioner of Education

The ability to read is key to a child's success in school and in life. It is the responsibility of schools and families to provide the environment and build the foundation needed for children to become readers. With this in mind, Alaska has set a goal for all children to become independent readers by the end of third grade. To accomplish this we need to work together to provide effective instruction and support for children as readers at school, at home, and in the community.

This booklet, *Opening the Door: What Families and Teachers Can Do to Help Every Child Become a Reader* provides information on how we can reach our goal. It is the second booklet in the Department of Education reading series, and builds on the research presented in *Unlocking the Door: Current Research on How Children Learn to Read.*

Our work must be based on the best, most current information available about how children learn to read. This booklet describes the components of a comprehensive reading program that need to be part of every young child's reading program. It also describes how families can contribute toward helping their children become readers.

Working together to help them become good readers is the best gift we can give our children to help them succeed throughout their lives. It is the key to their success, and the key to the future of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Richard S. Cross
Commissioner of Education

Helping young children learn to read is one of the most important things adults can do for them. Today, we know more than ever about how to help effectively. The research has confirmed what effective teachers have always known—that children need to know about and be able to use a number of reading strategies. Children need to know about the relationship of sounds to print, the ways in which language carries meaning, and how language is structured into sentences and paragraphs. When they put these three areas of knowledge together, and put them into use as reading strategies, they become skilled readers.

This booklet, *Opening the Door: What Families and Teachers Can Do to Help Every Child Become a Reader*, highlights key aspects of what we can do to teach and support young children as they learn to read using all of these strategies. It describes things children typically do at various stages, from pre-kindergarten to third grade, and how to help them learn at each of these stages. It is meant to be a guide to teachers as they develop comprehensive reading programs for their students, and to families who are looking for ways to support their child's literacy development at home.

Opening the Door builds on the information presented in *Unlocking the Door: Current Research on How Children Learn to Read*, also available from the Alaska Department of Education. Both booklets focus on the foundational reading skills young children need in order to be successful readers and learners throughout their school years and adult lives. The instructional practices presented in this booklet also reflect Alaska's Reading Performance Standards. Implementing reading programs that contain these elements will enhance students' opportunities to achieve the standards. Family involvement in the ways outlined will also help students achieve the standards.

Working together, families and schools, we can help all Alaska children learn to read, and to value reading as the key that opens the door to success in school and in life.

English/ Language Arts Content Standards

A student should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences.

A student who meets the content standard should:

- apply elements of effective writing and speaking; these elements include ideas, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, and personal style;
- in writing, demonstrate skills in sentence and paragraph structure, including grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation;
- in speaking, demonstrate skills in volume, intonation, and clarity;
- write and speak well to inform, to describe, to entertain, to persuade, and to clarify thinking in a variety of formats, including technical communication;
- revise, edit, and publish the student's own writing as appropriate;
- when appropriate, use visual techniques to communicate ideas; these techniques may include role playing, body language, mime, sign language, graphics, Braille, art, and dance;
- communicate ideas using varied tools of electronic technology; and
- evaluate the student's own speaking and writing and that of others using high standards.

A student should be a competent and thoughtful reader, listener, and viewer of literature, technical materials, and a variety of other information.

A student who meets the content standard should:

- comprehend meaning from written text and oral and visual information by applying a variety of reading, listening, and viewing strategies; these strategies include phonic, context, and vocabulary cues in reading, critical viewing, and active listening;
- reflect on, analyze, and evaluate a variety of oral, written, and visual information and experiences, including discussions, lectures, art, movies, television, technical materials, and literature; and
- relate what the student views, reads, and hears to practical purposes in the student's own life, to the world outside, and to other texts and experiences.

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A student should be able to identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively.

A student who meets the content standard should:

- make choices about a project after examining a range of possibilities;
- organize a project by understanding directions; making and keeping deadlines; and seeking, selecting, and using relevant resources;
- select and use appropriate decision-making processes;
- set high standards for project quality; and
- when working on a collaborative project, take responsibility for individual contributions to the project;
- share ideas and workloads;
- incorporate individual talents and perspectives;
- work effectively with others as an active participant and as a responsive audience; and
- evaluate the processes and work of self and others.

A student should be able to think logically and reflectively in order to present and explain positions based on relevant and reliable information.

A student who meets the content standard should:

- develop a position by reflecting on personal experiences, prior knowledge, and new information;
- formulating and refining questions;
- identifying a variety of pertinent sources of information;
- analyzing and synthesizing information; and
- determining an author's purposes; evaluate the validity, objectivity, reliability, and quality of information read, heard, and seen;
- give credit and cite references as appropriate; and
- explain and defend a position orally, in writing, and with visual aids as appropriate.

A student should understand and respect the perspectives of others in order to communicate effectively.

A student who meets the content standard should:

- use information, both oral and written, and literature of many types and cultures to understand self and others;
- evaluate content from the speaker's or author's perspective;
- recognize bias in all forms of communication; and
- recognize the communication styles of different cultures and their possible effects on others.

Reading Performance Standards Proficient Level Descriptors

(Approved January 20, 1999 by the Alaska State Board of Education)

5-7

Students:

- Distinguish, reproduce, and manipulate the sounds in words.
- Use a combination of the following to read and comprehend text:
  - knowledge of phonics, alphabet, and alphabetic principle, e.g., recognition of letter shapes, letter names, letter/sound relationships, initial/final consonants, vowels, letter patterns;
  - pictures and visual cues;
  - sight recognition of high frequency vocabulary words;
  - word structure, e.g., root words, prefixes, suffixes, rhyming words;
  - language structure, e.g., word order, grammar;
  - meaning structure, e.g., prior knowledge and context;
  - text structure, e.g., read left to right.
- Comprehend literal meaning from text.
- Use a variety of strategies to support comprehension, including predicting, questioning, rereading, and monitoring own comprehension.
- Read texts aloud with expression, demonstrating knowledge of punctuation and other conventions of print.
- Retell or dramatize a story after reading it.
- Restate information after reading a text.
- Identify the main idea of a passage.
- Read and follow simple directions to complete a simple task.
- Distinguish between common forms of text (genres): fiction and non-fiction, prose and poetry, and short story and drama.
- Identify and describe basic plot, main characters, and setting (time and place) in fiction.
- Express own opinions about texts.
- Make connections between a text and personal experiences, experiences of others, or other texts, and locate details in the text to illustrate these connections.
- Identify basic cultural influences in texts.

(To be assessed in the 3rd grade)

8-10

Students know and are able to do everything required at earlier ages and:

- Use a combination of the following to read and comprehend text:
  - knowledge of phonetics, language structure, and semantics;
  - text structures such as illustrations, graphs, and headers;
  - self-monitoring and self-correcting strategies;
  - adjusting reading pace or style based on purpose, task, and type of text.
- Use knowledge of word families, phonetics, context clues, visual cues, and structural elements to determine meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Infer meaning from text.
- Read texts aloud with rhythm, flow, and expression, demonstrating knowledge of punctuation and other conventions of print.
- Retell stories in correct sequence.
- Restate and summarize information or ideas from a text.
- Locate evidence in the text and from related experiences to support understanding of a main idea.
- Read and follow multi-step directions to complete a simple task.
- Explain the characteristics of the following: fiction and non-fiction, prose and poetry, and four major genres of fiction: short story, drama, novel, and poetry.
- Define and identify plots, settings, and characters in fiction.
- Compare and contrast plots, settings, and characters in a variety of works by a variety of authors.
- Differentiate between fact and opinion.
- Express opinions about a text and support these opinions with textual evidence.
- Identify themes in texts and connect them to personal experiences, experiences of others, and other texts.
- Connect cultural events, ideas, settings, and influences from one text to similar texts from other cultures.

(To be assessed in the 6th grade)

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between ages 11-14

Between ages 11-14, students know and are able to do everything required at earlier ages and:

- Apply knowledge of word origins, structure and context clues, and root words, and use dictionaries and glossaries, to determine the meaning of new words and to comprehend text.
- Rehearse and read texts aloud to an audience, in performances such as readers' theater, reading to younger students or peers, or as part of formal presentations including research reports and literature responses.
- Restate and summarize information or ideas from a text and connect new information or ideas to prior knowledge and experience.
- Clarify and connect main ideas and concepts, identify their relationship to other sources and related topics, and provide supporting details.
- Read and follow multi-step directions to complete a task, and identify the sequence prescribed.
- Analyze basic rules (conventions) of the four genres of fiction (short story, drama, novel, and poetry).
- Analyze and evaluate narrative elements including plot, character, setting, and point of view to determine their importance to the story.
- Differentiate between fact and opinion in text.
- Analyze an author's purpose and offer a critical opinion of the effectiveness of the text in meeting that purpose.
- Connect themes to personal experiences, experiences of others, and other texts, and locate evidence from texts to support or illustrate these connections.
- Compare and contrast how texts reflect historical and cultural influences.

(To be assessed in the 8th grade)

between ages 15-18

Between ages 15-18, students know and are able to do everything required at earlier ages and:

- Apply knowledge of syntax, roots, and word origins, and use context clues and reference materials, to determine the meaning of new words and to comprehend text.
- Summarize information or ideas from a text and make connections between summarized information or sets of ideas and related topics or information.
- Identify and assess the validity, accuracy, and adequacy of evidence that supports an author's main ideas.
- Critique the power, logic, reasonableness, and audience appeal of arguments advanced in public documents.
- Read and follow multi-step directions to complete complex tasks.
- Analyze the rules (conventions) of the four genres of fiction (short story, drama, novel, and poetry) and the techniques used in these genres, and evaluate the effects of these conventions and techniques on the audience.
- Analyze and evaluate how authors use narrative elements and tone in fiction for specific purposes.
- Express and support assertions, with evidence from the text or experience, about the effectiveness of a text.
- Analyze and evaluate themes across a variety of texts, using textual and experiential evidence.
- Analyze the effects of cultural and historical influences on texts.

(To be assessed by the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Examination)

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Phase 1

Awareness & Exploration

Preschool

Children explore their environment and build the foundations for learning to read and write. They begin to realize the existence of the alphabetic principle through "immersion" in a print-rich environment.

This is the typical developmental phase for preschool children (ages 3-5). Some preschoolers are just entering this phase and can be assisted by special attention. Others have moved on to Phase 2.

Children

Enjoy listening to and discussing storybooks.

Understand that pictures and print carry a message.

Demonstrate reading and writing behaviors.

Understand that talking and writing are used to communicate.

Begin to develop concepts about print, such as: Stories carry meaning, letters are different than words, groups of letters form words.

May begin to identify some letters and make some letter-sound matches.

Identify labels and signs in their environment.

Increase vocabulary.

Form opinions and discuss stories and information with peers and adults.

Sing songs and participate in rhyming games.

Try to represent ideas on paper using drawing, scribbling, known letters or approximations of letters to represent written language, (especially meaningful words like their name and phrases such as "I love you.")

Create story lines while playing.

Explore concepts and construct meaning by talking among themselves and with the teacher.

Draw pictures and experimentally "read and write" about what they have done or plan to do.

Follow spoken directions.

Form opinions and discuss stories and information with peers and adults.

Continue to make rapid growth in their understanding and use of oral language.

Teachers

Provide a classroom environment that values firsthand, real life experience and is consistent with the way young children learn.

Schedule play, such as dramatic play and block time, encouraging the incorporation of emergent reading and writing activities.

Establish a literacy-rich environment.

Read aloud several times each day.

Promote literacy-related play activities and provide a place for children to explore books as a part of play.

Share books with children, including Big Books, and model reading behaviors.

Engage children in conversation while reading. Ask opinion questions. Encourage predictions.

Talk about letters by name and sounds and use letter names when modeling writing.

Reread favorite stories.

Engage children in language games: rhymes, 20 questions, I Spy, etc.

Engage children in experiences with music, rhythm and movement, especially those experiences which allow for repetition and the following of patterns.

Encourage ongoing conversation with children and between children. Conversations include: making statements and asking questions; elaborating and explaining; listening; responding; expanding others' ideas; taking turns; thinking about and respecting alternative meanings; repeating and restating ideas; using language to investigate and wonder; enjoying and sharing the play of language through poetry, rhyme, and humor.

Provide written models of high-frequency words, names, labels.

Organize real life experiences of high interest to the children as part of the classroom curriculum. Play • Daily living • Field trips • Nature exploration

Reach out to families and support family capacity to encourage their child's literacy development.

Connect families with support resources in the school and community.

Work with families to identify family and child strengths that will support literacy development.

When possible, support the development of language and literacy in the child's first language.

Families & Parents

On a daily basis, read and reread stories to children, especially those stories with predictable text.

Engage children in conversation while reading. Ask opinion questions. Encourage predictions.

Provide daily, television-free, reading time, during which children see you reading and writing.

Locate books in a space accessible to children.

Visit the library regularly or order from the bush mail library. (Fairbanks and Juneau Public Libraries.)

Provide cut out letters, plastic letters or letter blocks for play.

Answer questions about letters and words.

Write child's name.

Talk with children, engage them in conversation, give names of things, show interest in what a child says.

Elaborate on what child says by adding adjectives and adverbs as descriptions. "Yes, it was a car, a shiny, red car, and it was moving rapidly."

Take time to listen and answer questions.

Encourage children to recount experiences and describe ideas and events that are important to them.

Provide opportunities for children to draw and print, using markers, crayons, and pencils.

Sing and play movement and rhythm games with your child.

Establish routines for sleep and meals.

Include children in "real life" activities, e.g. walks, trips to town, going to the store, and talk with children about what they are doing and seeing.

Model the use of literacy and talk about its importance in everyday life.

Phase 2

Kindergarten

Children develop basic concepts of print and continue to engage in and experiment with emergent reading and writing.

This is the typical development for kindergarten students, ages 5-6. Some kindergarten students will be in the exploration and awareness stage. They will need extra assistance and time to move to the experimental stage. Other kindergarten students will have moved to early reading and writing and will need more sophisticated materials and teacher guidance appropriate to their growing literacy.

Children

- Continue to enjoy all of the activities described as things preschool children do, but with more depth and sophistication.
- Enjoy listening to stories they are told and read. They can retell stories or describe an important event.
- Understand left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation and familiar concepts of print.
- Use descriptive language to explain and explore.
- Recognize some letters and letter-sound matches.
- Show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds.
- Match some spoken words with written ones.
- Begin to write letters of the alphabet and some high frequency words.
- Begin to use a variety of stages of temporary spelling.
- Listen and paraphrase simple directions.
- Participate in circle time discussions about books.
- Integrate "writing" into dramatic play and play at block and science centers by writing menus, lists, books, phone numbers, etc.
- Sing songs, repeat rhymes, take part in rhythm and movement activities.
- Use symbols or conventional writing to record or plan daily activities.
- When prompted, make observations and verbal comments about their own learning.

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Teachers

Provide a developmentally appropriate classroom where children learn by doing. The instructional techniques and variety of centers and activities described in Phase 1 continue to be important in kindergarten, but the content increases in complexity throughout the primary grades.

Encourage children to talk about reading and writing experiences.

Continue to support oral language development throughout the day with multiple opportunities for peer interaction and adult-student interaction.

Continue to reach out and assist families.

Integrate language development, opportunities for reading and writing, and experience with art forms like music, dance and visual arts to the extent possible.

Provide experience with contextualized print, such as: morning message, daily schedule, daily student choices, attendance, center planning and interactive writing.

Provide experience with functional print, such as, labels, signs and children's names.

Frequently read interesting and conceptually rich stories to children.

Model writing for daily classroom activities, in interactive writing and language experience and when taking dictation.

Demonstrate how letters are made often describing the thought processes involved in writing.

Sometimes help children hear sounds in words by slowly writing a word and saying its sound to illustrate the blending of sounds as they are written.

Reinforce the concept of word by leaving spaces and clearly notifying students when one word ends and another begins.

When possible, teach reading and writing in the child's first language.

Talk with and observe children to determine learning styles and areas of strength.

Communicate with families about what is happening in school.

Families & Parents

Continue the literacy support activities described in Phase 1.

Read and reread stories and informational materials to children on a daily basis.

Encourage children's attempts at reading and writing.

Invite children to participate in activities that involve writing and reading (for example following the steps to a recipe and cooking, making grocery lists, writing notes for other family members, checking the newspaper to decide which television show to watch).

Model reading and writing.

Talk to children in their first language.

Listen to children.

Read and say short poems and nursery rhymes with children.

Have children's vision and hearing screened.

Ask children to paraphrase directions.

If fluent in children's first language, use their first language to engage them in discussion about books.

Limit the time children spend watching television and videos. Plan what children will watch with them.

3

Early Reading & Writing

First Grade

Children begin to read simple stories and can write about a topic that is meaningful to them.

Children in this phase are typically first graders (ages 6-7). First graders may be performing at an earlier stage and need extra assistance to make certain they become fluent readers. In some cases they will have moved to Phase 4, transitional or beyond. It is important that these students have access to both reading and writing tasks which will support their literacy growth.

Children

Continue to enjoy many of the activities listed as preschool and kindergarten milestones, but with more depth and sophistication.

Enjoy expressing themselves through play and dramatic expression.

Read and retell familiar stories.

Use strategies (rereading, predicting, questioning, considering context, phonic analysis) when comprehension breaks down.

By the end of the year, orally read a variety of books with reasonable fluency: rapidly, accurately, with expression and appropriate phrasing.

Use reading and writing for various purposes on their own initiative.

Use letter-sound associations, word parts, and context to identify new words.

Identify an increasing number of words by sight.

Begin to monitor their own progress as readers and writers.

Sound out and represent all substantial sounds in spelling a word.

Write about topics that are personally meaningful.

Use some capitalization and punctuation.

Begin to monitor their own reading for meaning, structure of language and letter/sound correspondences.

Teachers

Continue the practices described for preschool and kindergarten programs, but increase the complexity of content and interaction throughout the primary grades.

Provide opportunities for language use in play and dramatic expression.

Read daily to the children, transcribing their language and selecting material that expands children's knowledge, develops their interest in books, and promotes language development.

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Read, write, and discuss a range of different text types (poems, informational books, riddles, etc.).

Model strategies and provide practice for identifying unknown words.

Help children identify books they can read independently. Give children daily practice independently choosing and reading books without teacher direction.

Give children time for independent writing practice, e.g., journals, free-writing, written conversations.

Work with individual students, and group students flexibly for daily guided reading, preferably within the context of real books, functional print, student writing, and teacher modeled writing. As a part of guided reading, teachers:

Ensure students have a daily opportunity to read in materials which allow 90 to 95% accuracy.

Ensure that not only do students have the opportunity to read at both their instructional and independent levels, but that they are matched with materials which meet their interest needs.

Provide students with the opportunity to discuss what they read with their peers.

Ask questions which require students to move beyond literal recall.

Systematically provide phonics instruction.

Teach and scaffold strategies for comprehension.

Provide an opportunity for students to decode and comprehend new text.

Teach new words and strategies for learning new words, such as: word banks posted, word walls, personal dictionaries or word lists, word of the day, poem of the week, word games, read-the-room.

Demonstrate and model strategies to use when comprehension breaks down.

Engage children in daily shared reading and writing activities, such as: read along, cooperative reading, unison/choral reading, group writing, dictation, interactive writing.

Use ongoing assessment, which includes frequent observation of children reading from authentic text and evaluation of work based on reading and writing continuums as well as dialogue with children to determine what each child is ready to learn and which instructional strategies will be appropriate.

Reach out to families. Keep them informed of their children's progress and of the steps they can take to support literacy development.

Families & Parents

Read to children and encourage them to read to family members.

Talk about favorite books.

Suggest that children write to friends and relatives.

Exchange notes with children.

Encourage children to share what they have learned about their reading and writing.

Read labels and signs with children.

Limit television watching.

Make certain children see adults enjoying reading and writing.

Communicate with your children's teacher. Let him or her know your child's strengths and special interests.

Establish family routines for bed time and nutrition.

Talk to the school counselor or the teacher if your family is experiencing stress.

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Phase **4**

Transitional Reading & Writing

Second Grade

Children begin to read more fluently and write various text forms using simple and more complex sentences.

Children in this phase are typically second graders (ages 7-8). Second graders may function at an earlier stage and need extra assistance to make certain they become competent, independent readers. In fact, it is essential that schools support teachers and parents in developing plans to provide extra help to second grade students who are not progressing in their literacy growth. Plans may include one-to-one tutoring, summer learning opportunities, more time reading, etc. Schools also need to explore with the family what family strengths can be built upon to help the child. School personnel, the family, and the child work together to develop a plan to help the child become a reader.

"We should strengthen our resolve to ensure that every child has the benefit of positive early childhood experiences that support literacy development. At the same time, regardless of children's prior learning, schools have the responsibility to educate every child and to never give up even if later interventions must be more intensive and costly." (International Reading Association and National Association for the Education of Young Children)

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Children

Continue to demonstrate the example competencies listed for preschool- grade 1, but with more depth and sophistication.

Read with increasing competence and independence.

Use strategies more efficiently (rereading, questioning, searching, reading on, phonic analysis) when comprehension breaks down.

Express opinions about what they read.

Identify beginning, middle, and end of story.

Use word identification strategies with greater facility to unlock unknown words.

Locate details to support a main idea or opinion.

Ask questions as needed for clarification and understanding during discussions or when given directions.

Identify an increasing number of words by sight.

Spend time reading daily from continuous text and use reading to research topics.

Follow simple two-step written directions.

Take steps to improve their own reading and monitor their reading by self-correcting and rereading when meaning is not clear.

View themselves as readers.

Teachers

Continue to provide a classroom environment that values firsthand, real life experience, integrates reading, writing and the arts and is consistent with the way young children learn.

Schedule play, such as dramatic play and block time, encouraging the incorporation of reading and writing.

Continue ongoing assessment and link to instructional decisions.

Continue to provide a comprehensive literacy program. A comprehensive program will include:

guided reading (systematic teaching for comprehension strategies, vocabulary development and word attack skills within the context of continuous text at the child's instructional level);

guided writing (such as writer's workshop or writing conferences);

independent reading and writing;

opportunity for peer interaction;

shared reading and writing; and

interactive writing.

Create a climate that fosters analytic, evaluative, and reflective thinking.

Schedule large blocks of uninterrupted time for reading and writing instruction and practice.

Ensure that children read a range of texts for a variety of purposes.

Integrate high-interest word play into the entire school day. The activities should build word knowledge, and knowledge of phonics.

Model enjoyment of reading.

Reach out to parents.

Families & Parents

Continue to read to children and encourage them to read to you.

Engage children in activities that require reading and writing.

Become involved in school activities.

Show children your interest in their learning by displaying their written work.

Visit the library, or order from the rural library service regularly.

Support your child's specific hobby or interest with reading materials and references.

Provide real-life experiences, which expand knowledge and allow for creative expression.

Create a daily, quiet television-free time for reading.

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Phase 5

Independent & Productive Reading & Writing

Third Grade

Children continue to extend and refine their reading and writing to suit varying purposes and audiences.

Children in this phase are typically third graders (ages 8-9). Third graders may function at an earlier phase and need extra assistance to make certain they become confident and competent readers. In fact, it is essential that schools support teachers and parents in developing plans to provide extra help to third grade students who are not progressing in their literacy growth.

Plans may include one-to-one tutoring, summer learning opportunities, more time reading, etc. Schools also need to explore with the family what family strengths can be built upon to help the child. School personnel, the family and the child should work together to develop a plan to help the child become a reader.

It is important that the extra assistance for students who have not become independent readers by third grade include daily reading and writing practice and coaching for strategies within the context of meaningful texts. The instructional program should be based on careful assessment of the student's strengths and needs and designed to allow the student to use what they already know to become a better reader.

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Children

Read fluently: rapidly, accurately, with expressiveness and appropriate phrasing, and enjoy reading.

Use a range of strategies when drawing meaning from the text.

Use word identification strategies appropriately and automatically when encountering unknown words.

Recognize and discuss elements of different text structures.

Make critical connections between texts.

Relate new concepts to prior knowledge.

Evaluate their own progress as readers.

Choose books independently for a variety of purposes.

Make a conscious effort to improve their reading skills.

Teachers

Provide daily opportunities for children to read, examine, and critically evaluate narrative and expository texts.

Continue daily independent and guided reading time.

Integrate vocabulary-building activities throughout the day.

Continue to create a climate that fosters critical reading and personal response.

Teach children to examine their own ideas, the ideas of peers, and ideas in texts.

Create a climate that engages all children as a community of literacy learners.

Create an integrated curriculum that provides authentic opportunities for students to engage in reading and writing.

Reach out to families and help them support their children's developing literacy.

Families & Parents

Continue to read to children, especially from more complex classics they cannot yet access, and encourage them to read to you.

Continue to support children's learning and interest by visiting the library and bookstores with them, or use Alaska's rural library service.

Find ways to highlight children's progress in reading and writing.

Stay in regular contact with your child's teachers about activities and progress in reading and writing.

Encourage children to use and enjoy print for many purposes (such as recipes, directions, games, and sports).

Engage children in conversations.

Let your children see you read and talk with them about the things you are reading.

Limit television watching. Help your child read the television guide from the newspaper and choose programs for the week.

Research Base and Summary Literature Citations

Preschool

Reading aloud to children appears to be the single most important activity for building understandings and skills essential for reading success.
(Wells 1985; Bus, Van Ijzendoorn, and Pellegrini 1995) IRA and NAEYC

Children's dramatic play incorporates literacy (experimental reading and writing) when children are exposed to print-rich environments.
(Morrow 1990; Vukelich 1994; Neuman and Roskos 1997) IRA and NAEYC

A central goal is to enhance children's exposure to and concepts about print, such as print carries the meaning of a story, the strings of letters between spaces are words, print corresponds to oral language, and reading progresses from left to right and top to bottom.
(Clay 1979, 1991) IRA and NAEYC

It is the talk that surrounds the storybook reading that gives it power, helping children to bridge what is in the story and their own lives.
(Dickinson and Smith 1994; Snow, et al. 1995) IRA and NAEYC

There is a relationship between listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each influences the other. Children learn language through communication and through opportunities to talk with more sophisticated language users.
(Applebee and Langer 1983; Bruner 1975; Cambourne 1988; Vygotsky 1978; Wells 1986) Braunger and Lewis

Children develop knowledge about and use of the alphabetic system through writing as well as reading.
(Chomsky 1979; Clarke 1988) Braunger and Lewis

Language is for communication among people, and it is acquired through purposeful and meaningful interactions.
(Bruner 1975; Harste, Woodward, and Burke 1984; Neuman and Roskos 1993; Vygotsky 1978; Wells 1986) Braunger and Lewis

Fundamental during this time is children's insight of the alphabetic principle, the understanding that there is a systematic relationship between letters and sounds.
(Adams 1990) IRA and NAEYC

Linguistic awareness games, nursery rhymes, and rhythmic activities expose children to the sounds of language which appear to be at the root of phonemic awareness.
(Bryant, et al. 1990) IRA and NAEYC

Phonemic awareness refers to a child's understanding and conscious awareness that speech is composed of identifiable units, such as spoken words, syllables, and sounds. Development of phonemic awareness is supported when children listen to patterned, predictable texts while enjoying the feel of reading and language.
IRA and NAEYC

Children benefit most from formal instruction in manipulation of phonemes only after they have learned some letter shapes and sounds and can apply what they learn to real reading in meaningful contexts.
(Cunningham 1990; Fourman, et al. 1991) IRA and NAEYC

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Children acquire a working knowledge of the alphabetic system not only through reading but also through writing. Preschoolers use their tacit knowledge of phonological relations to spell words. Temporary phonic spelling or invented spelling refers to beginners' use of the symbols they associate with the sounds they hear in the words they wish to write. This process encourages children to think actively about letter-sound relations. They learn to segment the words they wish to spell into constituent sounds. They also learn that writing has a real purpose.
IRA and NAEYC

Recent brain research has revealed that nurture affects the nature of the brain. "The brain is uniquely constructed to benefit from experience and from good teaching, particularly during the early years of life. Early experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain, and on the nature and extent of adult capacities. Early interactions don't just create a context, they directly affect the way the brain is 'wired'."
Shore

Kindergarten

Children need to be exposed to vocabulary from a wide variety of genres through reading stories and explanation of words prior to listening to a story.
(Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein 1986; Elley 1989) IRA and NAEYC

Repeated readings of a story appear to further reinforce the language of the text as well as to familiarize children with the way different genres are structured. Increasing the volume of children's playful, stimulating experiences with good books is associated with accelerated growth in reading competence.
(Eller, Pappas, and Brown 1998; Morrow 1988) IRA and NAEYC

The concept of word clarified by concrete demonstrations that strings of letters between spaces are words and that not all words are the same length is important in kindergarten. Teacher dictations of children's stories help develop word awareness, spelling, and the conventions of written language. Children's proficiency in letter naming is a well-established predictor of their end-of-year achievements probably because it mediates the ability to remember sounds.
(Juel 1991) IRA and NAEYC

The more opportunities children have to write the greater the likelihood that they will reproduce spellings of words they have seen and heard. Though not conventional, these spellings likely show greater letter-sound correspondences and partial encoding of some parts of words than do the inventions of preschoolers.
(Domingo 1993; Richges 1995) IRA and NAEYC

For children whose primary language is other than English, studies have shown that a strong basis in first language promotes school achievement in a second language.
(Cummins 1979) IRA and NAEYC

Children who are learning English as a second language are more likely to become readers and writers of English when they are already familiar with the vocabulary and concepts in their primary language. In this respect, oral and written language experiences should be regarded as an additive process, ensuring that children are able to maintain their home language while also learning to speak and read English.
(Wong Fillmore 1996) IRA and NAEYC

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Twenty percent of students may not develop phonemic awareness as they are learning to read. This number (20%) can be substantially reduced through more systematic attention to engagement with language early on in the child's home, preschool and kindergarten classes.
(IRA statement 1998) IRA and NAEYC

Teacher dictations of young children's stories help develop word awareness, spelling, and the conventions of written language.
(Clay 1979; Bissex 1980) IRA and NAEYC

Grades 1-3

Asking children to predict and analyze stories read by the teacher in small group settings appears to affect children's vocabulary and comprehension of stories.
(Karweit and Wasik 1996) IRA and NAEYC

Real reading is comprehension. One of the hallmarks of skilled reading is fluent, accurate word identification. Children need to read a wide variety of interesting, comprehensible materials, which they can read orally with about 90 to 95% accuracy.
(Durrell and Catterson 1980) IRA and NAEYC

Children need time for independent reading practice which includes reading to caregivers, self-selecting books, and engaging in the social activities of reading with their peers, asking questions, and writing stories. Good readers read more than poor readers.
(Hannon 1995; Morrow and Weinstein 1986; Juel 1992) IRA and NAEYC; Braunger and Lewis

Early readers are capable of being intentional in their use of metacognitive strategies.
(Brown and DeLouche 1978; Rowe 1994) IRA and NAEYC

Phonics is best learned in the context of connected, informative, engaging text.
(Adams 1990) Braunger and Lewis

Early readers read print better in familiar context (e.g. in stories) than in isolation.
(Goodman 1965; Kucer 1985; Nicholson 1991; Rhodes 1979; Stanovich 1991) IRA and NAEYC

Approaches that favor some type of systematic code instruction along with meaningful connected reading reported children's superior progress in reading.
(Bond and Dykstra 1967, Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1988) Snow, Burns, and Griffin

Instruction is systematic when it is planned, deliberate in application, and proceeds in an orderly manner. This does not mean a rigid progression of "one-size-fits-all" instruction. Rather, it means a thoughtfully planned program that takes into account learner variability.
(Strickland 1992) Braunger and Lewis

Early readers also typically read stories with familiar language better than stories with unfamiliar language such as the language found in "decodable text."
(Moustafa 1997) Braunger and Lewis

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Research Base and Summary Literature Citations

Grades 1-3

"Reading is a construction of meaning from text. It is an active, cognitive, and affective process." To support this construction of meaning, instruction should include explicitly taught comprehension strategies for reading narrative as well as expository text.
IRA and NAEYC

Writing challenges children to actively think about print.
IRA and NAEYC

Although children's initial writing drafts will contain invented spellings, learning will take on increasing importance in these years.
(Henderson and Beers 1980; Richgels 1986) IRA and NAEYC

Interactive environments enhance development of brain and neural connections.
Shore

Young readers are capable of being intentional in their use of metacognitive strategies. Children make predictions about what they are to read, self-correct, reread, and question if necessary, giving evidence that they are able to adjust their reading when understanding breaks down.
(Brown and DeLoache 1978; Rowe 1994) IRA and NAEYC

Children need time for independent reading practice which includes reading to caregivers, self-selecting books, and engaging in the social activities of reading with their peers, asking questions, and writing stories.
(Morrow and Weinstein 1986; Hannon 1995) IRA and NAEYC

Writing challenges children to actively think about print so many teachers integrate reading and writing in classroom instruction using writing for multiple purposes.
(Tierney and Shanahan 1991) IRA and NAEYC

Handwriting instruction helps children communicate effectively and should be part of the writing process.
(McGee and Richgels 1996) IRA and NAEYC

Spelling instruction should be an important component of the reading and writing program since it directly affects reading ability.
IRA and NAEYC

Teachers encourage children to become independent and productive readers, helping them to extend their reasoning and comprehension abilities in learning about their world. Children need many opportunities to analyze topics, generate questions, and organize written responses for different purposes in meaningful activities.
IRA and NAEYC

Sound assessment should be anchored in real-life writing and reading tasks and continuously chronicle a wide range of children's literacy activities in different situations. It must inform teachers about when and how much intensive instruction is needed on any particular skill or strategy.
IRA and NAEYC

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Research Base and Summary Literature Citations

Grades 1-3

By the end of third grade, the majority of children will be able to decode words with a fair degree of facility, use a variety of strategies to adapt to different types of text, be able to communicate effectively for multiple purposes using conventionalized spelling and punctuation, and see themselves as capable readers and writers.
IRA and NAEYC

Good teachers recognize that children do not progress from one literacy benchmark phase to another in a rigid sequence. Each child exhibits a unique pattern and timing in acquiring skills and understanding related to reading and writing. Human development and learning occur in and are influenced by social and cultural contexts.
IRA and NAEYC

Adequate initial reading instruction requires that children use reading to obtain meaning from print and have frequent, intensive opportunities to read.
Braunger and Lewis

Three potential stumbling blocks to reading are 1) difficulty understanding and using the alphabetic principle, 2) failure to transfer the comprehension skills of spoken language to reading and to acquire new strategies that may be specifically needed for reading, and 3) the absence or loss of an initial motivation to read or failure to develop a mature appreciation of the rewards of reading.
Braunger and Lewis

The third obstacle will magnify the first two. As with any domain of learning, motivation is crucial.
Braunger and Lewis

Where possible, i.e. with instructional guides, learning materials and locally available proficient teachers, language minority children should be taught to read in their native language while acquiring proficiency in spoken English.
Braunger and Lewis

Optimum class size in the early grades is 15 to 18 with one teacher.
(Nye, et al. 1992, Nye, Boyd, Zaharias, and Fulton 1994) NAEYC and IRA

When individual children do not make expected progress in literacy development, resources should be available to provide more individualized instruction, focused time, tutoring by trained and qualified tutors, or other individualized intervention strategies. These strategies are used to accelerate children's learning instead of either grade retention or social promotion, neither of which has been proven effective in improving children's achievement.
(Shepard and Smith 1988) NAEYC and IRA

"Children who are identified as having reading disabilities benefit from systematic instruction, but not at the cost of opportunities to engage in meaningful reading and writing. These children benefit from the same sort of well-balanced instructional programs that benefit all children who are learning to read and write. Programs are characterized by intensive one-on-one or small group instruction, attention to both comprehension and word recognition processes, thoroughly individualized assessment and instructional planning, and extensive experiences with an array of texts."
Snow, Burns, and Griffin

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References

In order to provide guidance for teachers, parents, families, and others who work with young children who are learning to read, *Opening the Door* summarizes ideas and research, and occasionally quotes directly from, four recent publications. Complete bibliographies for the research and summary comments found in *Opening the Door* are contained in these source documents.

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